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After the Boss passed on, the ranch changed. The mares and colts were sold, the polo equipment was stored, and sheep and cow ranching became the number one enterprise.

The thing that hurt the most in the change was giving up the people that the Boss and his operation attracted. In those times, the cool never knew how many were coming for dinner. Late evenings were big parties and long sessions into the nights.

The other day I realized how busy we'd been. Two of my cousins came by at lunch. It was the first time we'd had a visit in years. Their ranch is a couple of hours by slow to medium pickup travel, yet I had four grown sons here at the ranch that had never met them.

In the course of the visit, they mentioned that the reason they'd come down from up north was to buy a load of baling wire to put up their summer hay. My sons were awfully impressed. You see in this part of the Shortgrass Country about the only thing that's ever baled are the junk cars that an outfit processes in San Angelo.

Afterwards I had a hard time explaining why our side of the family has always used bucks and bulls to do the planting. You don't want to come right out and tell a young kid that some folks have more ambition than owning a bitterweed sheep or an English bred beef cow.

It's apt to hurt the family image to admit that practically every other German family in the whole state can turn a milo patch or a cotton farm into a bountiful acreage that's only a problem for the bureaucrats in charge of worrying about the farm surplus.

You don't want to tell your own children that if the seed companies had been depending on your line, they would've had to import everything from wild dandelion seed to skunk weed.

To be honest, I really didn't have to hide anything from the boys. Every since they were little, the biggest crop I've made in the garden was three tomatoes that came from a volunteer vine. I guess we'd have lost the second World War if my victory garden had counted. On a percentage basis I've lost more money on squash and okra than I ever did on cattle and sheep.

Anyhow, it was pleasant having the people in the old living room. I thought about how much the Boss would have enjoyed their company and how he'd have taken them all over the ranch showing them his horses.

I wonder too why we didn't turn out to be thrifty hay farmers like the cousins did.